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OPL 101

Benefits of using multi-par linen system

Rotating linen sets makes housekeeping more efficient, preserves inventory

BY BILL BROOKS

As many on-premises laundry managers know, labor makes up 45-50% of a laundry operation's expenses. Second only to labor

is the cost of linen replacement. In order to better preserve luxury linen investments and save money on labor, housekeeping departments can adopt a three-par linen system.

Once an OPL understands all of the benefits of investing in a three-par system, it is important to consider how to best care for linens, including new laundry technologies that will help ensure the best

wash results and increase labor productivity.

HOW TO BE ON PAR

A par level refers to the number of linen sets an OPL, most com-

monly in a hotel, currently has on hand. For example, if a hotel only had one complete set of linens for every bed, that would equate to one par. Ideally, each hotel should have three sets of linens on hand at all times, or three par.

These linen sets rotate through a cycle that helps to make the housekeeping staff more efficient and preserves the linens: one set is currently being used by guests; a second set is being laundered and processed; and the final set of linens is already folded and resting for a minimum of 24 hours.

While having a three-par linen system is ideal, par levels do not need to be full sets. If a hotel is not continuously reaching capacity, they may want to invest in a 2½-par system. This means that only a portion of the beds need to be changed daily, rather than every room.

MULTIPLE PAR IN PRACTICE

Amanda Hedtke, general manager at the Appleton Residence Inn in Appleton, Wis., updated her hotel's bedding to triple sheeting (a style of bedding found in high-end hotels that involves multiple sets of sheets) when the property went through renovations in 2012.

After purchasing higher-quality linens, Hedtke knew she needed to protect her investment, which meant investing more in additional sets of linens up front to avoid overuse and the increased fiber deterioration that it causes.

As Hedtke quickly realized, there are several benefits to having multiple sets of linens on hand—most importantly, labor expenses and linen life.

STAFF PRODUCTIVITY

"For the hospitality industry, time is money—especially when it comes to housekeepers. I have seen hotels that don't have multiple sets of sheets available and housekeepers have to leave the front desk notes to put sheets on a bed before checking guests into a room," says Hedtke. "This stalls not only your housekeepers, but eventually starts to impact the work at the front desk and, ultimately, the customer."

Having a set of linens, be it towels, sheets or pillowcases, readily available for the housekeeping staff helps all team members function more efficiently. With labor being the largest expense for laundry managers, it is best to have a well-organized system in place for laundering, folding and storing all of the additional linens.

"After our laundry is done being processed, we have a folding system to ensure our resting linens are easy to organize and grab," Hedtke says. "Our staff folds all of the bedding for one bed together

so that the housekeeping staff can neatly stack more on each cart and does not have to spend time counting linens when he or she is trying to prepare for incoming guests."

LINEN RETENTION

After the linens are folded and put away, they are given 24 hours to rest before being fitted to beds. While it may not seem like a vital part of the process, this time allows the fibers to relax, evens out wrinkles and prevents linens from becoming stiff.

"The initial linen investment is definitely worthwhile in the long term; guests appreciate the improved sleep quality that accompanies linens that still feel like new," Hedtke comments. "The three-par system prevents overuse so the linens do not feel like they have been repeatedly laundered, and aren't faded and hardened with time."

OVERDRY PREVENTION

Operators can further preserve their linen investment by taking a closer look at the drying process. A recent survey found that 79% of commercial laundry professionals believe that laundries overdry linens by eight minutes per cycle.

Overdrying is the quickest way to destroy a luxury linen investment. To prevent this from happening, OPL managers should consider investing in a tumble dryer that has an automatic shut-off system, which can sense the dryness level of the linens and stop when the desired level is reached. This automatic shut-off eliminates the need for OPL staff to stop and start the machines and make judgment calls as to whether or not the linens are dry.

Additionally, managers have the ability to save up to an estimated \$4,866 per year in labor costs when using a machine equipped with overdry prevention technology.

While a multiple-par linen system allows the linens to rest—a pre-condition for longer linen life—without a quality tumble dryer, an on-premises laundry's initial investment in additional linens may be wasted. Perhaps, most importantly, when making the jump to investing in a multiple-par linen system, make sure you have the laundry technology to support and maintain it.

Ultimately, owning several sets of linens has a large and quick return on investment, meaning an increased linen life and a happy, well-rested hotel guest. ALN

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